This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

THE ANTIDOTE;

OR,

A PROTEST AGAINST UNHAPPINESS.

THE ANTIDOTE;

OR,

A PROTEST AGAINST UNHAPPINESS.

BY A LAYMAN.

When trouble comes, thou canst, or canst not help it;
Treat it accordingly;—remedy, or bear;
Be wisely brave, yet trustful in thy God.
Unarmed, unmanned, UNHAPPY, never be.

"TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED IS LIFE AND PEACE."
Rom. viii. 6.

"GREAT PEACE HAVE THEY THAT LOVE THY LAW."
Ps. cxix. 165.

LONDON:
WILLIAM MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1869.

141. K 323.

PREFACE.

FOREMOST among the many troubles of mankind, is a disease so common, so painful, so universally shunned, that an antidote to it must needs be invaluable. Happily there is such an antidote, an antidote older than the disease itself, an antidote always within reach, and offered to us "without money and without price," yet, strange to say, so much neglected, that the disease remains prevalent as ever.

This disease is called UNHAPPINESS! Reader, have you ever suffered from it? do you ever feel any dread of it? do you sometimes meet with it in others? would you know its remedy—that ANTIDOTE of which I speak? If so, let me ask you to read this little book, for you may find therein some sacred truths, some indisputable facts, some cogent reasons and sound arguments, which will if rightly compounded, make up that antidote, and if rightly applied, cure that disease.

These materials have been put together by one who, having spent many years of a somewhat long life, in active business, in many lands, under very varied circumstances, and with a full share of varying fortune, has had ample opportunity of proving the need, and the efficacy, of the antidote prescribed. He has here endeavoured to show how applicable it is to *all phases* of the disease; and if his book can claim any attention, amid the many that enforce in general terms, the "great gain of godliness," it must be chiefly owing to this particular and practical application of the argument.

The subject is one of universal interest, and if the study of it, as treated in these pages, be half as profitable to the reader as it has been to the writer, and by God's blessing helps in any measure to brighten the path, and lighten the burden, of fellow travellers in life's journey, the object aimed at, in making public, thoughts originally written down only for private use, will be fully attained.

BROOKMEAD,
1869.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE.

	PAGE.
Common causes of Unhappiness	1
Such causes ought not to produce Unhappiness .	2
Unhappiness indicates a want of holiness . .	2
Because incompatible with true spirituality . .	3
Benefit of studying the subject	4
Christ our great Example	5
Nature of spirituality	6
Inconsistency of nominal Christians	8
God must be all in all	9
True happiness independent of joy and sorrow .	10
A test or touchstone of our spiritual state . .	10

APPLICATION

OF THE ARGUMENT TO THE COMMON TRIALS OF LIFE.

Death of Friends	11
Affliction of various kinds	21
Loss of Property	25
Loss of health and bodily suffering	29
Calumny and Persecution	32

PAGE.

Insults and Slights 35
Domestic Quarrels 38
Irritability of Temper 43
Painful Anticipation of the Future 47
Depression of Spirits 51
Disappointment 54
Nervous Timidity 58
Old Age 61
Contemplation of Death 65
A Sense of Sin in ourselves 70
" in others 72
Discontent: as to our Lot in Life 74
" as to our Business or Profession . 79
" as to our Natural Character or Constitution 80
Content not inconsistent with Progress . . . 82
On doing our Duty to God:
The Benefit as regards the Present . . 84
The Benefit as regards the Past and Future 88
What that Duty is 93
How to ascertain what it is 95
Conclusion 100

THE ANTIDOTE;

OR,

A PROTEST AGAINST UNHAPPINESS.

INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE.

COMMON CAUSES OF UNHAPPINESS.

A.—Good morning, my friend: I was going to give you a cheerful greeting, but you look so unhappy that I fear it might be ill-timed.

B.—Unhappy! yes, indeed I am; and I hardly know how people can be otherwise, when they look around on all the distress and misery and sin that fill the world. You would not wonder that I look unhappy, had you seen but half the suffering and sorrow that has lately come under my notice. This morning I have heard that a dear widowed friend of mine has just lost her only son, and is utterly broken-hearted. She says that her happiness is gone for ever, and that she can never hold up her head

again. Poor soul! surely *she* has cause enough to be unhappy. Then I have just seen our unfortunate neighbour, who has lost everything by bad speculation. He is utterly ruined, and is in such a depressed and despondent state of mind, that he really seems half prepared for self-destruction. As I came home, I looked in upon a poor sick and suffering man, lying on his bed without any hope of recovery, and surrounded by a young family quite unprovided for:—no wonder that *he* is unhappy. And are there not thousands of such cases? I will not trouble you with my own cares and vexations; but I find them very hard to bear. Oh! it is a sad world, and full of sorrow. I am sure you need not ask me again why I look so unhappy.

A.—No, indeed, if such afflictions do necessarily make us unhappy: but I believe they *ought not* to do so. You look surprised; yet I go further than this: I believe that such unhappiness as you describe—comfortless, despondent, almost rebellious—springs from a heart not right with God,—in fact (though it may sound harsh), that such want of happiness implies a want of holiness.

B.—Oh, surely not; such an opinion sounds both harsh and cruel: would you have me tell that afflicted mother that her unhappiness only proves her want of holiness?

A.—No; it would unquestionably be very unkind to do so, and I doubt whether any good would result. There is a time for all things—even a time to weep; and at such seasons of deep affliction, we are naturally and most reasonably, led to mourn with those that mourn, and to give them our utmost sympathy. At such times nature asserts her sway, and poignant grief is but nature's testimony to the love we bore and the sorrow we feel. I would not charge your afflicted friend with want of holiness, nor our ruined neighbour with indiscretion, nor that sick man with having wilfully destroyed his health: but truth is no less truth because it is sometimes both kinder and wiser to withhold it. The time for considering such a subject as this, is when the mind, uninfluenced by great grief, or any other strong emotion, is disposed to reason calmly, and is anxious only to learn the *truth*.

When I speak of unhappiness, I do not mean *grief*, which is most natural, or *sorrow*, which is part of man's heritage below, and is often sanctified to him; but a state of mind devoid of that happiness which every Christian, in right of his high privileges, ought to possess; and which, in justice to his high calling, he ought to manifest to the world. I believe that the want of such happiness in a Christian, affords evidence that he is not so spiritually-minded, so trustful in God, so advanced in holiness, as he might be and ought to be; and, therefore, that I

am justified in using what you think such a strong expression—viz., that want of happiness indicates want of holiness.

If you think it worth while to test the correctness of this view of the case, I would invite you to listen to the reasons and the arguments by which I arrived at it: reasons and arguments neither original nor novel, but founded on religion, confirmed by reason, and verified by the holy and the good of all ages. You may possibly find in them, what will tend to your own happiness, and through you, to the happiness of others. You may find that He who sends affliction, sends also strength to bear it. You may find that many of the trials and troubles of life are either made, or increased, or perpetuated by ourselves. And you may find, what will be practically more useful than all the rest, a test—a touch-stone—indicative of your spiritual state: something that will tell of backsliding when you would not otherwise suspect it; that will prompt you to self-examination, and lead you to seek for guidance and strength from above, before you have wandered far from the right way.

B.—After all, I suppose you can tell me no more than my Bible tells me—no more than sermons, and hundreds of books tell me. I will not say that I am as good as I ought to be, perhaps, were I better, I should be happier, but I am sure I know

many excellent religious people who, when trouble and sorrow come upon them, are just as miserable, just as much cast down, as those who seem to have no religion at all. How do you account for this?

A.—That is precisely what my arguments will account for. I maintain, that people, however religious they may think themselves, or may appear to be to others, have not studied their Bibles, their sermons, and their books, to any good purpose, if, when affliction comes upon them, the effect is such as you describe; their religion, whatever it may be, has failed to establish that blessed state of mind which necessarily prevents the unhappiness we are speaking of.

B.—But surely you do not mean that spirituality of mind will produce such equanimity, that we are not to rejoice amid the pleasures, or smart under the troubles of life. Such cold-hearted artificial stoicism would be utterly unnatural, and destroy some of the best parts of our humanity.

A.—Granted; but I do *not* mean this. We cannot aspire to anything better than the example set us by our Lord, who neither taught nor practised a cold stoicism. He sympathised and even wept with others, evincing all the tenderness of human love. We cannot err so long as we do what He

did. What I mean is, that spirituality of mind, properly understood, and practised, ought to ensure such habitual peace of mind as is incompatible with such unhappiness.

B.—Tell me exactly what you mean by spirituality of mind.

A.—I understand it to mean the habitual recognition of God's presence, God's providence, and God's love; the habitual remembrance of our *spiritual* nature, and our *spiritual* interests; close and loving communion with God, and such a trust in Him as sends us to Him as to a loving Father, and reconciles us to all He does; in short, it is the state of mind necessarily produced by the indwelling, and the active operation, of the Holy Spirit, that Comforter which our Saviour promised to send, and did send, to His disciples.

B.—I think the state of mind you describe, belongs to, and is attainable only by, the recluse, who having almost renounced the world and its vanities, lives a life of holy contemplation and uninterrupted devotion. Common daily life will not admit of such abstraction. If we spend our time in meditating upon God and our souls, how can we fulfil our earthly duties?

A.—I admit that a state of mind *wholly* spiritual

is not consistent with our present daily life of needful activity. Such a state may be enjoyed beyond the grave; but while here, we have to perform the part of men, and not that of disembodied spirits. Still we must remember, that within this body of flesh, dwells that self-same soul that must appear hereafter at the bar of God, to give its account, and to live eternally in joy or sorrow; and if we sincerely believe that the soul's eternal safety depends upon the manner in which we spend our lives, we can hardly avoid thinking very much about it. The interests of soul and body may at first sight seem to be distinct, and opposed to each other, but we may be sure that He who endowed us with two natures, has not made the relative duties of the two irreconcilable. So far from our worldly affairs hindering us on our way to heaven, they are in fact the instruments we are to work with, and the materials we are to work upon, in doing the will of God, and to the Christian they become chiefly important as they forward, or retard his heavenward progress.

> "The trivial round, the common task
> Will furnish all we ought to ask;
> Room to deny ourselves; a road
> To bring us, daily, nearer God."

I cannot see that there is anything irreconcilable or inconsistent in the union of a spiritual state of

mind with an active useful Christian life. There is much more inconsistency in the fact that people to all appearance truly religious, are too often, as you say, utterly cast down and inconsolable when trouble comes upon them. With the words "THY WILL BE DONE" continually on their lips, no sooner does that will cross their own, than they rebel against it, or yield to it with the most rebellious spirit. Approaching death is often to such persons, as much a king of terrors, as unwelcome, as greatly dreaded as if their professed faith were a fiction, and their future a blank, or something worse. Why is this? what does it prove? Surely that their religion is not what it ought to be, for if there be no comfort in it, there can be little reality in it. In such cases, a want of happiness, proves I think, a want of holiness.

B.—I doubt it. There are afflictions which so wrench and strain our very nature, that we cannot wonder if an excess of grief drives out at least for a time, all calm and holy thoughts. Something must preponderate, and here grief becomes stronger than religious feeling; but after a while the intensity of emotion subsides, a more tranquil frame of mind ensues, and then religion resumes her place. This seems to me so natural, and so common, that I question if it can be as inconsistent with true religion, with a holy mind, as you would argue.

A.—Where then do you put the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"? You say, something must preponderate; my whole argument is based on this truism; it rests on the one great principle that God must reign supreme, not only when there is nothing to draw the thoughts away from Him, or when, after a passionate burst of grief, the agitated mind is glad to find anything stronger than itself to lean upon, but continually and without exception. And why should not God always reign supreme in our hearts? What can be more reasonable, or more desirable, than that we should recognise at all times His presence, His providence, and His love; that we should look up to, and trust in, and adore, Him on whom we depend for all our blessings temporal and eternal; that amid the vexations of daily life we should have something higher and better to turn to; and that, liable as we are to the cares, the sorrows, and the disappointments of the world, we should be able to look forward with pleasure to a home in heaven.

B.—What you say is reasonable; nevertheless, as long as I live, I shall look for joys and sorrows, and consequently for happiness and unhappiness, just as I shall look for day and night.

A.—No one will deny that human life is one of

joys and sorrows, but while you seem to think that these joys and sorrows form the measure of our happiness or unhappiness, I believe that true happiness is independent of them, and is to be maintained in spite of them, resting as it does, on another foundation. In fact, that though we have our share of unavoidable joy and sorrow, our happiness depends mainly on ourselves; and it is, of course, on this ground that my whole argument rests. You will, however, see the force and the utility of the argument better, if we apply it in detail to the actual events of life, and in doing this, you will find not only that the principle is quite as applicable to small as to great troubles, but that as a *test* of our spiritual state, it is perhaps most useful as regards the former, because they occur most frequently. What we really want in daily life, is some monitor to tell us when we are wavering, or falling from the right standard. Few of us can bear the gentlest hint, even from the dearest friend, that our conduct is evidencing a want of holiness, especially if it be repeated as often as we give occasion for it; but in this test we have such a monitor, faithful, searching, always at hand; and if attended to, very useful.

Let us then come to the practical application of this test.

DEATH OF FRIENDS.

The DEATH OF FRIENDS is the great trial that first suggests itself, a trial which perhaps more than any other seems to *justify* our unhappiness; yet if calmly considered we shall find, I believe, that it will not do so.

Why are we unhappy when our friends die? If we have hope in their death, and it generally happens that the better they were, the more we mourn their departure, we cannot consistently grieve *for them.* To them "to die is gain." We mourn our own loss, we have lost that which was most pleasant and most useful to us, and gave the chief interest to our lives. The doating mother loses the child that was to be the support and solace of her declining years, or the child mourns the parent whose love and protection seem almost essential to his being. The husband or wife sorrows over one, without whom existence becomes a blank, and feels that the sunshine of life is for ever gone. Cause enough truly for the deepest sorrow; and yet if this is all, does it not prove that God did not hold the *chief* place in the heart; that His will is not our will; that our prevailing desire has been the continuance of our earthly happiness?

It were surely more wise to consider habitually the tenure on which we enjoy such blessings—LENT, NOT GIVEN; to look through our friends up to God, who has in kindness blessed us with them; and while continually thanking Him for them, to recognise at the same time, His perfect right to call back His loan. This habit is by no means inconsistent with a natural and soothing sorrow when God deprives us of those we love; but our gratitude for past mercies will prevent that sorrow becoming immoderate, and prevent also such repining, as would seem to reproach God for this act of His providence.

B.—Would not this habitual recollection that we must lose those dearest to us, this frequent thought of their mortality, throw a sadness over our intercourse with them, and lessen very much, our enjoyment of life?

A.—It might do so as long as the idea is new, but it is in truth much more calculated to produce the opposite result. We should enjoy most of our blessings,—friends, health, wealth, comforts of every kind, much more, did we habitually look upon them as *daily* mercies, and *transient* mercies too, to be made the most of while we have them; but as regards our dearest friends, how especially will this consideration tend to make us

value them, to make us more loving and more tender, more anxious to do them good, to give them pleasure, to avoid giving them pain, careful not to cast a shadow, even for an hour, over our common happiness. Is not this made manifest in our conduct towards them when they are overtaken by illness, or threatened by death? How completely do such circumstances banish all peevish, ill-tempered, or unkind thoughts, if any such existed before. Depend upon it, we need not fear the truth, the less we hide it from our eyes, the wiser, the better, and in the end the happier we shall be; and the truth is that both we and our friends are liable to death at any moment, and ought to live as if each day might be our last.

Again, we may consider whether we are not bound both in justice and gratitude, to think at least as much of the many blessings that remain, as of that one which is taken. How often are the former utterly lost sight of, as though our whole happiness depended on the one missing object, till another, and perhaps another, heavy blow is struck; and then our increased grief testifies how very dear these remaining blessings were to us, though they have meanwhile called forth but little thankfulness.

"All are not taken! there are left behind
Living Belovèds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a precious thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind."

Again, are not these heavy trials, if rightly viewed, often real mercies? Are we not apt to grow so fond of, so well satisfied with, our earthly comforts and possessions, as to look no further? Do not these things bind us more and more closely to this world, till we think of no other? Are not our earthly treasures too often the very idols of our hearts, making us actually forgetful of Him who gives them to us, and who ought to be loved above all; forgetful, till with the grievous chastening of a Father, He would remind us that we are sons? (Heb. xii. 7,) in very mercy saying to us, "My son, give *me* thine heart." (Prov. xxiii. 26.)

Again, is there really much wisdom or consistency of conduct in excessive grief? Why should we admire and respect those who bear up nobly against every other kind of evil, such as great bodily suffering, or the loss of health, or of property, or it may be of sight or hearing, and yet almost doubt the propriety of a calm and brave struggle against despondency when God issues His decree, and looks for a willing recognition of it? "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18.) "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i. 21.) Such words surely express more piety, more faith, than mere grief can do.

B.—But not more affection.

A.—Why so? Can we not entrust our dear ones to our heavenly Father's keeping? Can we not realise something of their better portion? and if we really believe them to be happy, may we not most consistently bring our minds into a state more in unison with theirs, and so, though parted from them for a while, even now unite with them in our joint songs of praise? But this reminds me of two cases exemplifying what I mean.

Having to meet one who had recently lost a very dear friend and companion, I was prepared to find her greatly depressed, and unable to refer to her heartfelt loss without deep and painful emotion. Instead of this she was calm, cheerful, active in good works, glad rather than otherwise to talk about her departed relative, and when she did so, it was as though the two had parted only for a while, and with the sure prospect of meeting again. Knowing as I did how they loved each other, and how heavy was the bereavement, I could not but see in this brave struggle, and victory over self, strong faith, and a most happy realisation of the truth as it is in Jesus. About the same time I knew another mourner, who could not take the same happy view of her case. Her great trouble was not very recent, but still one long continued sorrow overpowered her, and wholly occupied her mind. Neither gratitude for the past, nor hope for the future, nor assurance of the happiness of the departed, nor con-

sciousness of blessings that remained, seemed to throw one gleam of sunshine into that broken heart; she only felt and said that her sorrow was overwhelming, and that it could end only in the grave.

B.—Poor soul! After all there is something very beautiful in this lifelong sorrow, this evidence of strong affection. I cannot bear the idea of forgetting our friends as soon as we lose sight of them, and allowing the world with its pleasures and its business to drive out all thoughts of them.

A.—None will doubt the beauty of deep affection, the question is, whether this is the best mode of showing it. One step further, and we come to the Indian Suttee, when, in proof of her affection, the poor heathen widow sacrifices life itself, and with good reason too. Her husband was her god, and with him have gone all earthly joys, and hopes, and duties, nothing remains but to follow him; but we are talking of Christians, and the God of Christians you know, is a "jealous God," and wants some place, yea even the first place, in our hearts.

Why should we forget our friends because we cease to weep immoderately for them, or because we continue to perform the duties of life heartily, and as cheerfully as we can? It is those whose excessive grief when thinking of lost friends, prevents the fulfilment of these duties, that have the

greatest reason for forgetting them, and happily time will do its work even with the most disconsolate. But why wait for the deadening influence of time to do what reason and religion ought to do at once? So far from forgetting departed friends, we may not only cherish their memories, but consider it a great blessing to be able to do so. Perhaps nothing helps so effectually, and so pleasantly to draw our minds from this too absorbing world, (on a Sunday morning for example) as the affectionate remembrance of those who have gone before.

It is delightful to hear of the annual visit to a parent's grave, or of the frequent flower placed on that of wife or child. Anything that leads us to look onward and upward is to be encouraged, and surely this is compatible with a proper recognition of daily mercies, and daily duties; compatible too with all the pleasure derived from friendly intercourse, and from works of kindness and usefulness; compatible in fact with a happy Christian life.

B.—Did you use these arguments with that deeply afflicted mourner?

A.—Such arguments are of little use to one in her state of mind—to one who, like Rachel of old, "refuses to be comforted." (Jer. xxxi. 15.) As long as the *feelings* alone have the mastery, arguments are of no avail; indeed they may be quite

out of place where sympathy and consolation are most needed, but this only shows the utility and the wisdom of considering them beforehand. An old writer quaintly says, that if we have to gather and compound our remedies when sickness comes, we may find ourselves too weak to do so; and that, as when deep sorrow is upon us, we cannot reason calmly, it is well to have our medicines ready, so that when we have occasion for them, we may have nothing to do but to take them.

B.—Do you then hold that life-long sorrow and mourning are to be condemned as necessarily implying want of gratitude, or of faith, or of holiness?

A.—Certainly not. I have no more right to condemn the life-long mourner, than I have right to condemn the hermit, who enjoys his safe seclusion, and his holy meditation far more than anything the world could offer him. If a great sorrow has brought this mourner very close to God, and continued mourning keeps her there, and affords her more comfort and more safety than the now unattractive world can do, who shall condemn what has been so sanctified to her, and what affords her so much consolation? "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." (Prov. xiv. 10.) Such mourning

may be perfectly consistent with a holy peace of mind, and is very far removed from the unhappiness which indicates a want of holiness.

B.—Then you admit that grief, consequent on the death of friends, may be really beneficial, that it may soften the heart, and render it more susceptible of religious impressions, and that on this ground it is to be encouraged rather than not.

A.—Truly many a mourner has had cause to say with the psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (Ps. xii. 71.) Many a stony heart has thus been brought to God, and can truly say—

"I would not miss one sigh or tear,
Heart pang or throbbing brow;
Sweet was the chastisement severe
And sweet its memory now."

A great change has taken place and that change exemplifies very well the principle we set out with, that if one deep interest prevails, smaller ones will give way. Here, a great sorrow swallows up every thing else; the mourner becomes indifferent to the ordinary occupations, pleasures, cares, and anxieties of life, and alive only to one great truth, pointing him to another world; and he is the more disposed to turn to religion, because his common pursuits are not just then sufficiently interesting to keep thoughts

of God and eternity away—well it is, if at such a time, religion so endears herself, as to become his life-long companion and comforter. Undoubtedly affliction is one of the means by which God draws us to Himself: and the nearer we draw to Him, the more tranquil and happy we become. But we must remember that even he, who after all his sorrow, after the deepest meditation, and closest communion with God, can say, "Lord, my affliction has brought me to Thee, my eyes long blinded, are now open to my real good, the world has lost its all-absorbing interest, its hold on me is loosened, I can now at last, trust entirely to Thee, take what Thou wilt, leave what Thou wilt, Thy will be done, give me but the full assurance that I am Thine, and I am perfectly content;" even he whose real feelings would be thus expressed, simply enjoys that trust in God, that spirituality of mind, which should be ours at all times. In any other state of mind how can we be fit to die? and if we are in this holy trustful state, the death of our dearest friends, though very hard to bear, and productive of great and long-enduring sorrow, will not destroy that inward peace, that peace of God, in which true happiness consists.

AFFLICTION.

B.—There are some trials that seem to me even more hard to bear than the death of friends, trials causing long continued sorrow, anxiety, and pain, with little hope of relief. In one household, for example, it may be the temper, or the habits, or the mental state of some much loved member of it, casting a dark shadow over all that would otherwise be bright and happy. In another there may be discord and ill-will, or jealousy and hatred, where affection and confidence ought to be unbroken. In another we may find some dire disgrace involving the whole family, and blighting the fair name, and the fair prospects of it. Trials like these, do, and ever will, cause great unhappiness, but you surely cannot consider such unhappiness *wrong*, or any indication of estrangement from God, as your general argument would imply.

A.—The trials you speak of are indeed grievous to be borne; but why are they called *trials?* Is it not because they try our faith, and test the sincerity and efficacy of our religion, as well as our readiness to bow to the will of God?

There is, I believe, but one way of viewing great

afflictions, viz., as part of the burden we are called upon to bear in this our pilgrimage. As Christians, as servants and soldiers of Christ, we ought to accept that burden not only with fortitude and resignation, but with willingness and cheerfulness, under the full persuasion that our heavenly Father will not lay upon us more than we can bear; that He can and will supply strength equal to our need; that "all things work together for good to them that love God," (Rom. viii. 28); and that our particular affliction, though perhaps not laid on us specially for our chastisement, may nevertheless be instrumental to our real and eternal good. Every true Christian knows and feels that he possesses both an outer and an inner life, and that the inner spiritual life is by far the more important of the two. Affliction may darken his outer life, and deprive it of many of the enjoyments and delights he once hoped for, or rejoiced in: but if it help to make the world less engrossing, and less dangerous, and tend in any way to draw him nearer to God, he will confess that it is not altogether evil.

It is hard to persuade those who are under the pressure of affliction, that it may be good for them; or that their particular trouble is not greater than that of many others; or that their case, painful as it is, is quite compatible with happiness: and yet such may be the fact. We make a great mistake when we conclude that our happiness depends on

certain narrow conditions, whether of our own imagination, or such as we have unwittingly become accustomed to, and that any breach of those conditions necessarily destroys that happiness; for nothing is more apparent to those who have seen much of the world, and know much of human nature, than the power possessed by man of adapting and reconciling himself to circumstances. What may truly be called "the bitterness of death" (1 Sam. xv. 32) has often to be endured while life remains, but very many who have passed, or are passing through the sad ordeal, have learned to kiss the rod, and to lean with a happy confidence on Him who was "sent to bind up the broken-hearted," and "to comfort all that mourn," (Isa. lxi. 1, 2), they have learned to cast all their care on Him who careth for them—to lay their burden on Him who has promised to sustain them: and in so doing they have greatly lightened that burden which would otherwise have crushed them.

Treating the question in the most practical manner, the fact is, that so long as we think about and brood over our affliction to the exclusion of every other thought, it must be oppressively burdensome. The remedy lies in thinking about something else, and thus to a certain extent *forgetting* our trouble. Reason and religion both tell us that what we cannot help, and cannot alter, we may safely and properly leave in God's hands; they

also tell us that life has its duties, and that there is for every man—irrespective of his special trouble—abundance to think about and to do.

It is true that under the weight of affliction, our happiness may have to depend on something quite different from that on which it *seemed* to depend, before that affliction came upon us; a new phase of life may be thereby opened out, but to that we must (and we can if we try) adapt ourselves; God has placed us in a new position, and bids us occupy it. The affliction will probably narrow our sphere of action, shut us off from much that was pleasant, put an end to our joyousness and mirth, and point out a path of duty unknown before; but it assuredly need not deprive us of communion with God, or shut out one ray of heavenly light. On the contrary, our darkened path will make that communion more sweet, that light more welcome; and I fear that those mourners who by continually brooding over their troubles, lose sight of the mercies and lovingkindness of God, and take little pains to reconcile themselves to His dispensations, are needlessly "piercing themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 10), are refusing the consolation that religion offers, and are giving evidence that they do not yet love the Lord their God with all their hearts and all their minds, which is you know, the first and great commandment.

LOSS OF PROPERTY.

A.—LET us next consider the LOSS OF PROPERTY as a trial hard to bear. It is a trial which often irritates or sours the temper, and painfully engrosses the mind; sometimes fills us with thoughts and feelings most uncharitable towards our fellow-men, and most ungrateful towards God; often destroys all our happiness, and sometimes alas, is so intolerable, that the wretched sufferer thinks it better to put an end to life itself, than to bear it any longer. Yet how unwise and how inexcusable is all this.

We may perhaps have enjoyed much worldly prosperity, and find it suddenly swept away. Perhaps the toil, and anxiety, and success of many years have ended in disappointment; and instead of the comforts we have been enjoying or anticipating, poverty with its attendant evils must henceforth be our lot; yet if this, hard as it is to bear, destroys our happiness, it is evident that that happiness was built upon a wrong foundation, on the sand, and not upon a rock.

The pain arising from the loss of property, may often be traced to considerations of a worldly and very unworthy character. Riches procured us the

praise and honor of men, and we like these better than the praise of God. They purchased for us numberless comforts and indulgences, and we are not fond of hardship and self-denial. They made us independent of others, and we are perhaps wanting in that humility which befits the Christian. They were loved it may be for their own sake, and we cannot bear to part with what we love. Despondency on such occasions shows how great a snare our prosperity has been to us, gives weight to our Saviour's words, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God," (Mark x. 24), and shows the wisdom of the precept, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." (Ps. lxii. 10.)

The Christian views his property as he views his health or his reason, all of them talents committed to his keeping, to be employed as instruments in doing his duty to God and man. He takes all prudent means to keep and improve the one as well as the others; but instead of being puffed up by his possessions, he thanks God for them, and at the same time thinks of the responsibilities they entail, and the temptations and dangers that attend them. The distinction he draws between himself and his poorer neighbour is that when they both stand before their Judge, *he* will have to account for many talents with which the other was not entrusted. While enjoying his worldly goods, he will endeavour

to sit loose to them, having a better treasure in heaven, and in the same degree that he is grateful for them, will he be kind, and compassionate, and humble-minded, towards those whom fortune has not so favored, and who in the eyes of God may be better than himself. When change of fortune comes, he will be supported and kept from despondency *mainly* by those holy thoughts and feelings which yield happiness alike to rich and poor, and which are habitual to him; but he will also remember that numberless mercies are left to him; that he is still far better off than multitudes of his fellow-creatures; perhaps than he himself once was; that this trial may be a blessing in disguise, inasmuch as continued or increased prosperity might have estranged him from God, and made him too fond of this world; in fact he will look for the bright side of the picture, and it is certain that if he does look for it in a trustful Christian spirit, he will find it, and be enabled to maintain a calm and happy frame of mind, notwithstanding his misfortunes.

B.—Yes, he will brace up his mind to bear *his own* troubles; but may he not feel unhappy when he sees those dependent upon him, and greatly beloved, reduced to poverty, and perhaps contempt?

A.—He must feel grieved for them; but though

he has always desired, and laboured for their worldly comforts, he has still more desired their spiritual welfare. The loss of this world's goods is by no means the greatest loss they could sustain. He feels that heaven is open to the poor as well as to the rich, and that it matters little in what condition we prepare for it. As in his own case, he recognizes, and feels thankful for, the many blessings that remain to them; and among these, the wholesome lessons that may be learned from adversity. His habit is to turn all the great events of life to good account: and he finds that he can do so even now. He derives his chief happiness from a continued trust in God; and he teaches his children to do the same, encouraging them by his example to a cheerful acceptance of that state of life into which it has pleased God to bring them.

Contrast this man with one, who when he loses his money, becomes miserable, and tell me if this last man's want of happiness is not an evidence of his want of holiness.

BODILY SUFFERING.

B.—Bodily Suffering is a trial we may well consider: suffering, I mean, arising from want of health, severe pain, loss of limb, or of sight, or hearing, for example. How will your argument apply here?

A.—I might simply say, "Go and see." Visit sufferers from such causes, and you will find very many of them, whose holy, happy, peaceful minds must convince you that such trials do not necessarily make people unhappy. Many of them will tell you that their suffering has been their greatest blessing; it has forced them—perhaps unwillingly—from the world, with its temptations and snares, and brought them both to know and to love God. They will tell you that they never knew what real peace of mind was till their health was gone; that "it is good for them that they have been afflicted." (Ps. cxix. 71.) They will look up to God, and say—

> "We need as much the cross we bear,
> As air we breathe,—as light we see:
> It draws us to Thy side in prayer,
> It binds us to our strength in Thee."

Those who chafe and fret, and complain of God's

heavy hand, are longing to return to the business, the pleasure, and the varied interests of active life: they cannot, or they will not, make God's will their will; they are not content to lean on Him, to trust in Him, to rejoice in His love, to commune with Him and their own hearts;—and yet the joys of heaven which they hope to attain, must rest on some such state of mind as this, and must be quite irrespective of those worldly occupations they are so fond of, and so anxious to get back to. I think their want of peace is a strong evidence of their want of holiness.

Acute bodily pain scarcely admits of argument; but when we see, as we often may, the sufferer writhing under torture of body, still tranquil and happy in his mind, trusting in God, and saying, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good" (1 Sam. iii. 18)—we have proof that the one may be wonderfully brought under subjection to the other, and that sickness and pain in their most grievous forms, are not in themselves able to destroy our inward peace.

B.—But may we not properly feel unhappy that sickness checks our usefulness, and prevents the performance of duties undertaken solely for the good of others, and the glory of God?

A.—Rest assured, that what sickness prevents,

God will not require. If we wish to do His work, let us be content to do it in His way. There may be no little presumption and pride of heart in taking for granted that we can do a great deal for God's glory; and the humility brought forth on a bed of sickness may exercise a far holier influence, and be a far more effective instrument in God's service, than the activity and zeal we think so desirable. Many a sick and almost silent Christian preaches from his bed of suffering lessons of faith, and trust, and patience, more eloquent and more lasting than those that come from the pulpit: and none need doubt that God can, if He thinks fit, give "great increase" to the smallest seed, to the gentlest word, dropped prayerfully and lovingly into the ear of another, by the humblest or most afflicted of His servants.

Has God thus called, and *laid His hand* on thee!
The high appointment take, and His schoolmaster be,
To teach by precept and example too,
What trust *in* God, and help *from* God can do.

Teach the great lessons of thy suffering Lord;
Teach the sweet comfort flowing from His word;
Teach how the feeblest on their God may call;
And by such teaching, teach that God has work for all.

CALUMNY AND PERSECUTION.

A.—CALUMNY, PERSECUTION, unjust accusation, and consequent loss of friends and of reputation, may be the trial that some are called upon to bear. They can meet with no sympathy, find no ear to hear them, no heart to care for them. Yet even this hard trial ought not to destroy the peace of the spiritually-minded man. He knows that human opinion cannot affect him in the sight of God, on whose love and favour he chiefly relies for happiness; he knows that his best and unchangeable Friend is left; He can commune with Him, though he be abandoned by the world, saying in his Saviour's words, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." (John xvi. 32.) He will endeavour to imitate Him who was despised, reviled, and persecuted; and who, knowing that the malignity of His enemies resulted mainly from their ignorance and blind prejudice, prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

A wise man will not lightly esteem the good opinion of others, whereby his influence, as well as his happiness, is increased; but should defamation and persecution be his lot, he will maintain or lose his peace of mind in the same proportion that he

esteems most highly the praise of men or the praise of God; and if such trials do greatly disturb him, there is evidence that the Spirit of God does not occupy and rule his heart as it ought to do.

B.—I believe your argument is sound so far as it goes, but I think it is the very magnitude of the trial that sometimes enables us to bear up against it. The mind acquires strength and energy from the excitement, and then—assisted by religion, or it may be by philosophy—a wonderful mastery is obtained over the feelings; but such great trials come so seldom, that they can hardly be said to affect our general daily happiness, and therefore their influence can practically be but a poor test of our general daily holiness.

A.—You are right—calamities like these occur so seldom, that as a *test* they are quite insufficient for daily use, but we shall find no lack of what are called the minor trials of life, and these are equally to the purpose. If loss of friends, or health, or money, or reputation, alone destroyed our peace, we should indeed enjoy long intervals of uninterrupted happiness; but how far is this from being the case! Perhaps on a cursory glance at our lives, we think

that our days and weeks are spent happily, but a close observer might tell us that the frequent sigh, the clouded brow, the fretful temper, or the angry word, too clearly prove the contrary. Perhaps we admit that we are not altogether happy, though we can hardly tell why; and if we search for the cause, we may possibly find it in circumstances so trifling, so unworthy of regard, that the least real misfortune is sufficient to make us forget them altogether; such circumstances are too frequently the cause of unhappiness, and such unhappiness indicates, I believe, a want of holiness. Let us consider some of them.

INSULTS, SLIGHTS, ETC.

INSULTS, SLIGHTS, or other kinds of personal affront, are sore trials. In the fulfilment of our duty we may perhaps have to deal with proud, envious, spiteful, or malicious people who apparently delight in annoying, thwarting, or injuring us. Now exposure to such treatment often makes us very unhappy, yet it really need not, and ought not to do so. When however, such is the case, it is quite possible that our own pride may have more to do with it than we at first suspect; pride arising from want of Christian humility and of that charity which "beareth all things." Fenelon says, "He who thinks nothing due to him, will not think himself neglected." If our own pride be in truth the ultimate cause of our own unhappiness, we have at once an evidence of want of holiness; for we read, "a proud heart is sin." (Prov. xxi. 4.) But let us take another view of the matter, to show that peace of mind under such circumstances, depends greatly on the general principle we have kept before us, viz., the occupation of the mind by higher and holier thoughts. If we are habitually influenced by these; if we are conscious of the rectitude of our motives and conduct; if we are armed with proper self-

respect, we shall be in great measure invulnerable to such uncalled-for provocation; we shall feel neither the sting nor the poison of it; we shall be unconscious of a great deal, and indifferent to a great deal more.

As regards such disagreeable people, it is certain that we should avoid them if we could, but if duty brings us into contact with them, a sense of that duty ought to enable us to bear with their annoyances. We cannot pass through this world without difficulties and crosses, neither would it be well for us to do so; they exercise our patience and our charity, and test the sincerity of our religious profession. Remember however, that peace is not ensured by the mere control of our words and gestures; smothered fire only burns more dangerously within; true holiness prevents such fire from kindling.

We should look upon the unkind conduct of others, as one of the ills to which humanity is subject, to be borne without repining, and if possible, turned to good account. Charity will greatly help us in this work. Let us in the first place judge as we would be judged, and be careful that we do not fall into the common error of taking offence when none is intended. "Charity thinketh no evil, is not easily provoked," but tries to put the best construction on everything. We may probably attribute something to misapprehen-

sion, something to want of wisdom, something to natural warmth of temper, something we might ascribe to palliating circumstances, of which we are ignorant; let us put down as little as possible to intentional malice; and if after making every allowance, we cannot blind our eyes to the wickedness of the motive, "Charity," which "never faileth," still teaches us to hate the sin, but to be sorry for, and pray for the sinner.

In any case, the train of thought occasioned by the injury should be one tending to good and not to evil; as for example, when a servant of Wilberforce made an insolent reply to him, he merely said to to a bystander, "I would not have that man's temper for all the world." Thus, we may either feel thankful that our own minds are under better control, or compassion for the person offending us, or we may nobly endeavour "to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," (Gal. vi. 1), or simply fix our thoughts more closely on other matters, and so by encouraging thankful, or charitable, or useful thoughts, keep out angry ones, and remain free from the festering wounds too often inflicted by injuries and insults. Trials of this kind are not so likely to fall to the lot of a consistent Christian as to that of other men, but when they do, he will treat them with the indifference they deserve, and say with the poet Young, that they "excite his pity, not impair his peace."

DOMESTIC QUARRELS.

Domestic quarrels are too often a cause of great unhappiness. We are possibly subjected to ill-temper, contradiction, peevishness, caprice, vexations of various kinds, from those with whom our lot in life is cast—and then what is our conduct? do we quarrel openly and hotly with our companions, and thus set them at defiance? or, controlling the outward signs of anger, do we nourish secret enmity towards them? or more charitably disposed, do we confine our feelings to heartburning and melancholy? strangers in any case to affectionate and sympathising love—the softener of the heart, the balm of life, the peculiar charm of home! Perhaps we do not try to remedy the evil, or we try in vain, and attribute our unhappiness wholly to the conduct of others, thinking how happy we might be, if only they were more amiable. Perhaps conscious of such angry feelings, we think, and pray, and resolve, in order to subdue them, but without success; no sooner does the annoyance recur, than we feel vexed, our temper becomes ruffled, and though we may show no outward sign of anger, there is an irritability of mind,

and a degree of heartburning, known only to God and ourselves, but which quite destroys our peace. We believe that the case is beyond our control, and thus allow such domestic trials to embitter our lives. If told that our unhappiness is in great measure attributable to ourselves, we deny the truth of the assertion; and if further told that it is evidence of our unholiness, we are perhaps offended; yet we may find such to be the fact if we fairly consider the matter.

In the first place, instead of at once laying the blame of these angry feelings on another, let us see if it is not really our own, not anxious to vindicate ourselves, but rather hoping that the blame is really ours, for then we know that the remedy is in our own hands.

If we cannot justly blame ourselves, let us at least exercise patience, forbearance, and kindness; and as "a soft answer turneth away wrath," it is more than probable that by so doing, we shall not only maintain our own peace of mind, but re-establish that of our companion.

> "Better far to gain a friend,
> Than make an enemy."

Satan prompts us to retaliate, and give back word for word, to endeavour by any means to justify ourselves, and to feel pleased if we obtain a victory even at the expense of friendship. The Holy Spirit,

whose help we professedly desire and pray for, teaches another lesson, and enables us to obtain a better victory, by turning frowns into smiles, and angry feelings into love.

> Who quarrels with his friend, neglects sweet fruit
> To chew the bitter leaves; poisons the spring
> That should refresh him; tramples on pearls,
> And fools away his time most foolishly.

But beyond this, let us consider the power we possess of being happy under circumstances that often make people miserable. We know that these circumstances do not affect us equally at all times; sometimes we are almost, or quite insensible to them; for instance, if we are in great pain, or in fear of immediate death, or have been almost miraculously preserved from some great danger, or have just heard of some unexpected good fortune, or anticipate some extraordinary pleasure, at such times we are either unconscious of things that usually annoy, or pay no attention to them; our thoughts are occupied with matters of deep interest, and cannot attend to trifles; or our companion may be very ill, or in great distress, we do not then feel his peevishness, or care about his contradiction; all showing that if our minds are fully engaged with objects of real importance, we are almost proof against the minor miseries of life; this is the whole secret, and it is on this principle alone that we can expect continual peace. The Christian's

mind dwells on matters of deeper interest than domestic quarrels, and though he may not be altogether able to escape them, he learns to treat them with comparative indifference.

B.—But how does it happen that sometimes, as you say, when a person has taken especial pains to overcome the evil, and fortified himself beforehand, as he believes, by prayer, and sound reasons, and strong determination, and used the same weapons during the temptation, he still finds himself unable to conquer his rebellious feelings, and retain his peace of mind?

A.—I believe it is to be accounted for on the same principle, that some one thing must have the ascendancy; although he foresaw his danger, and employed every means he could think of to ward off the evil consequences, he fails, because his mind is still fixed immoveably on the evil itself; he is struggling to be free, but the chain is still about him; safety depends not upon *driving* out the evil thoughts, but upon *keeping* them out; and they can only be kept out, by occupying the mind with things of more importance.

B.—By thus taking in these minor trials, you certainly add very much to the utility of your test.

A.—But I have not yet enumerated half the evils we are apt to complain of as justifying our unhappiness. Possibly we are blessed with health and competence, and with friends who love and value us; we are not subjected to losses, slights, malice, or domestic quarrels; we have nothing to complain of in the conduct of others towards us; or it may be that though the usual share of these things falls to our lot, we bear them with a Christian spirit, and they do not render us unhappy. Still, if we carefully recall our days and hours, we may find that some other causes disturb that serenity of mind which constitutes true peace; causes originating *in ourselves*, in our natural character, or temperament, in the state of our health, or in habits that have grown into a second nature; such for example as irritability of temper, and undue attention to little annoyances; painful anticipation of future evil, depression of spirits—to all of which, as causes of needless unhappiness, our test is equally applicable.

Let us begin with IRRITABILITY OF TEMPER.

IRRITABILITY OF TEMPER.

PERHAPS some slight pain, some disappointment, some trifling loss, or accident, some inattention of others to our wishes, may put us out of humour; if everything does not go on just as we like, we are vexed and angry. Possibly we have no complaint to make, nothing in particular has occurred to thwart our wishes, and yet we are nervous, irritable, anything but comfortable; every sense seems to be peculiarly susceptible of annoyance; sounds irritate us that are unnoticed by others; we can hardly raise our eyes without seeing something that offends; the words of others seem to grate upon our ears; failing to catch at any new grievance, we brood over some old one, or anticipate some future evil, thus making ourselves fretful, gloomy, and unhappy. If we reflect at all we may probably have good sense enough to admit that such things ought not to vex us; we may acknowledge the folly of being so much disturbed by them; but we attribute everything to natural infirmity, which we consider a misfortune rather than a fault, and we take no pains to remedy the evil, because we decide that it is incurable; becoming of course still more

unhappy by arriving at this conclusion; the absurdity of which is apparent, when we recollect how many natural infirmities we do control by the exercise of common sense and determination.

Nervous irritability is no doubt to a certain extent constitutional, but it is often greatly affected by circumstances over which we have control; and as it may lead to sin, we are in duty bound to avoid whatever encourages or increases it. If by want of care we have allowed the evil to gather strength, we have in that fact an evidence of sin, for we must never forget that we are to search out the *cause* of evil, and avoid the first step, which is perhaps the most sinful of all, because most easily resisted. It is no excuse for one sin that it has been caused by another. With this truth in view, we may probably trace our irritability to the state of our health, and then find that our health has been affected by some indiscretion, something we could have avoided, had we but used the necessary forethought and self-denial. Thus, over excitement, irregular hours, indolence, inattention to diet, may have produced or added to the evil we complain of; and if we know this to be the case, without trying to regulate ourselves in these matters on the high ground of religious duty, we need not seek much further proof of want of holiness.

But suppose that we cannot discover the cause of our nervous uncomfortable state in our own impru-

dence, facts clearly prove that it does not depend so much upon the peculiar structure of our mind, as upon the principle we are keeping before us. It is *the want of some leading object*, that leaves our mind exposed to every absurd and evil suggestion that can be prompted by our own corrupt nature, or by our spiritual enemy, allowing it to prey upon itself, rankling and fretting till it becomes an intolerable sore. If in our most irritable moods, we become deeply interested in anything, whether talking, reading, or acting, or if anything of importance occurs to occupy our thoughts, we are at once comparatively at peace; and it is observable, that an employment requiring the least possible exertion of thought, is sometimes sufficient to relieve us from the most disagreeable reflections; whence it is evident, that if the mind is interested in matters worthy of its attention, above all, if it dwells habitually on the duties, the high privileges, and the glorious hopes of a Christian, it cannot be painfully affected by evils, which annoy us only when we have little else to think about.

Such is the high principle upon which we may hope to maintain our peace of mind. At the same time, we are not forbidden to avail ourselves of minor considerations, or of any means which we know to be practically useful towards the attainment of our object, and to this end, we may sometimes find that the forced and almost mechanical

maintenance of outward calm, will very much assist us in recovering our inward peace of mind when it is endangered. Thus, when suddenly thrown off our guard, we find ourselves agitated, and induced to give way to angry thoughts, or angry words, we may profitably turn to the poet, who so beautifully reminds us of the Saviour's presence, and of that Saviour's power and willingness to help, and may say with him—

> "Hush, idle words and thoughts of ill,
> Thy Lord is listening, 'PEACE, BE STILL.'"

And if at the same time we proceed with what we may be doing or saying with forced deliberation and quietness, we shall probably not only avoid what would be painful and hurtful to others, but actually regain the tranquillity we so much desire, and rejoice in having gained that best of all victories —a victory over ourselves.

> Be master of thy temper, not its slave;
> Such bondage cramps, and galls, and humbles thee;
> Oft times prevents true magnanimity,
> And draws a needless cloud 'twixt thee and heaven.
> Rev'rence thyself, retain thy self-command,
> And, bound by God alone, be as "the strong man armed.

PAINFUL ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE.

If our unhappiness arise from PAINFUL ANTICIPATION OF THE FUTURE, it affords strong evidence that we do not sufficiently trust in God, and that we cannot reconcile ourselves to His providence. Prolonged life will inevitably be attended by those trials and afflictions which come in the common course of nature. Dear friends will sicken and die; we shall grow old and feeble; and other troubles will undoubtedly fall to our lot; nevertheless, the prospect need not make us unhappy.

We must not forget that the dread of future trouble, usually implies present freedom from it; that dread of future loss, implies present possession; that the capability of suffering very much from change, implies a present condition demanding thankfulness and praise. If a veil is mercifully thrown over the future, while blessings calculated to gladden the present are daily granted to us, God cannot desire that we should lose sight of His mercies in order to look fearfully and gloomily into that future, which after all is unknown!—unknown

because we are not *sure* that any one of the anticipated evils will overtake us. Possibly death will save us from them all! and yet,—strange inconsistency of man,—the disheartened prophets of evil days would usually fly from the alternative, and still live on, spite of their forebodings.

Again, we are very apt to dread not only the troubles themselves, which may be more or less certain, but the immediate or remote consequences of them, though the latter will probably be utterly different from what we predicted; for it often happens, that what we looked forward to with dismay, proves to be most beneficial. How much wiser and better to leave all this in God's hands, convinced that with His blessing "all things work together for good to them that love Him." (Rom. viii. 28.) Common sense prompts us, and religion encourages us, to use all lawful means to provide against such evils as may be at all within our control, but having conscientiously done this, we have done our duty, and ought not to be over anxious about the result. The experienced Christian is well assured that what God lays upon him, God will give him strength to bear. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. xii. 9), is a promise that ought to satisfy him. We are told, moreover, that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," (Matt. vi. 34), and we need not add to the troubles of life by anticipation. It is surely ungrateful, to

overlook the multitude of daily blessings we enjoy, in thinking painfully of the probable loss of some one of them; to walk in a garden of flowers, and derive no pleasure, because we know that they will fade, and that some thorns are to be found among them. God has been very bountiful to us, and has bid us "rejoice in His works," and "serve Him with gladness;" and the blessed principle of hope is undoubtedly bestowed upon us in order that we may look cheerfully and not despondently into the future.

Though trust in God is all we need to brighten our future prospect, we may, if we think fit, bear in mind a few minor considerations tending to the same end.

1. The power we always have of adapting ourselves to circumstances; and of making *the time being*, the starting point of our future career.

2. The certainty that come what may, it will always be possible to find a line of duty which ought to satisfy us, and a ray of hope which ought to encourage us.

3. The probability that with the trouble, when it comes, there will be some unlooked for compensation.

This last consideration points to the *benefit* of affliction; while it makes us sorrowful, it may make us holy; while it takes away enjoyment, it may take away temptation;—it may try our faith, con-

firm our hope, make us more heavenly minded, more useful as examples, even more happy than before. However much, or in whatever way the affliction may affect us, we shall in any case only have to perform some new part in our Christian warfare, wherein as soldiers and servants of Christ, we are charged not only to fight manfully, but to endure bravely, going on our way rejoicing; with the constant recollection of God's promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," (Deut. xxxiii. 25).

These considerations show both the reasonableness and the advantage of looking *hopefully* and *cheerfully* into the future, and the manifest absence of Christian faith and trust when such a hopeful view cannot be obtained; and thus, I think, we are brought to the conclusion, that unhappiness arising from anxious, painful anticipation of the future, is a sure indication of a want of that holiness of mind, the fruit whereof is PEACE.

DEPRESSION OF SPIRITS.

B.—Let us next consider DEPRESSION OF SPIRITS, occurring without any special or apparent reason, as a cause of unhappiness.

Though we may be habitually cheerful, a cloud will sometimes overshadow us, a load of melancholy will weigh us down. Our customary blessings are not withdrawn, but they lose their charm; and life flows on without any of the joy that should belong to it. How is this? and how will your argument bear upon it?

A.—Such depression may result from various causes; such as natural constitution, the state of our health, even change of wind or weather; but it much more often proceeds from want of self-discipline.

Occupation will sometimes remove the evil, or rather enable us to escape from it; this is well; but it is, on the whole, better to face our enemy than to fly from him, and get, if we can, at the root of the evil, in order to eradicate it.

We should, in the first place, do all we can to discover the origin of our depression. If we find that a wounded conscience is the cause, we have evidence of sin; and as Christians, we know the

remedy. If we trace it to something we have said or done, let us only convince ourselves, by an honest retrospect, that our conduct was right, or at any rate that it was what we thought right, and the satisfaction of having done our duty will go far to remove our depression. Should the enquiry show that we have acted imprudently, unkindly, and sinfully, we ought to feel thankful that our eyes have been opened to the fact. This conviction of our error will necessarily entail some new duty by way of reparation or otherwise; and if we are actuated by a right spirit, the pleasure of doing this duty will effect our cure.

If we cannot attribute our depression to such causes, but feel it to be rather a sickness of the mind, let us be particularly careful that it does not lead us into sin. At no time more than this, shall we find the benefit of settled habits. We may feel disinclined to do our duty, either to God, to our neighbour, or to ourselves, and much more disposed to offend all, by ingratitude, unkindness, and indolence; therefore, knowing our danger, we should go about our usual duties mechanically, and go through with them resolutely and courageously, and then it is probable that what we have begun only because it is right, we shall continue with pleasure.

Lastly, we may consider despondency, when immoveable, as an affliction sent by God to try our

faith and exercise our patience. We are bowed down it is true, and may seem to be making no advance in holiness; let us take good heed that we go not back; let us stand with all humility before God, and wait His pleasure; wait with patience till He thinks fit to remove the cloud, remembering His promise, "thus saith the Lord, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." (Isaiah xxx. 15.)

Thus we see, that viewed as the consequence of sin, occasional depression may prove useful by prompting us to search our hearts and discover unseen or forgotten wrong, whereby we may be able to repent of and rectify it, and thus establish ourselves in Christian joy; and that viewed as a dispensation sent by God, and beyond our control, it will be borne by a devout Christian with humility and patience; and that in no case ought it to destroy his inward peace.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

A.—Disappointment, in a general sense, is such a fertile source of unhappiness, that it may very properly be brought under our view. Disappointment may come upon us in an infinite variety of forms; such as plans and projects defeated, anticipated pleasure thwarted, fortune broken, ambition mortified, love unrequited, confidence betrayed, domestic happiness destroyed, health and activity brought to an end, and so forth; but whatever its particular form, the word disappointment usually implies hopes and expectations unfulfilled. Now, if it be true that "he who expects nothing will not be disappointed," it is almost equally true that the greatness of our disappointment is proportioned to the greatness of our expectations; and since our hopes and expectations are of our own creation, and spring from within us, the question arises, whether our disappointment does not also do so; whether we do not owe a very large portion of it to having looked for too much, to having raised our hopes and our sanguine expectations far beyond the proper limit. If it is so, how much unhappiness may be said to be of our own making. We sometimes see

a downcast, melancholy person, whose life we are told has been blighted by some disappointment; and among those pitiable objects who have altogether lost their reason, are not a few, whose sad malady is ascribed to the same cause; while apart from such extreme cases, how abundant are the instances of persons, whose days are embittered and rendered joyless by disappointment of one kind or another.

B.—This is very true, and very sad; but surely rather a misfortune than a fault.

A.—The disappointment may be a misfortune, it is the unhappiness that constitutes the fault, or rather, to carry out our argument, the unhappiness proves that there is a fault somewhere, and it is very easy to see where it lies. We have been looking with too much confidence and certainty to things in their very nature uncertain and untrustworthy. We have been saying with too much presumption, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" forgetting that at any moment God may say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (Luke xii. 19, 20.) We have been saying, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain;" forgetting to add, "If the Lord

will, we shall live, and do this or that." (James iv. 13, 15.) We have in fact been "setting our affection" too much "on things on the earth."

Perhaps all goes well with us, great success attends our efforts, we attain all we have wished for, and we thereupon give ourselves up to self-gratulation, and unmixed happiness; forgetting the tenure, forgetting the thorn that is to be found under every rose. We think fit to alter the first and great commandment, and thus we read it, "Thou shalt love" the great object of thy desire, be it wealth, or fame, or pleasure, "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," and we act accordingly; and when the great Dagon of our worship, and of our own setting up, falls shattered at our feet, no wonder that we are unhappy.

If we inscribe the word, "God willing," on all our projects, plans, and promises, remembering that failure and disappointment must be our frequent portion, we shall be much less troubled when that disappointment comes; and if, as was before remarked, we look upon our earthly blessings as *daily* blessings, and as *transcient* blessings too, we shall be the more thankful for them while they last, and the better prepared to resign them when God shall see fit.

Whatever the disappointment, let us see God's hand in it. Our long cherished plans may be

broken up; our dearest earthly hopes may be destroyed, a dark cloud may overshadow us, but we have not lost *all* that is dear to us; we have still a God to love and serve, an ample field for usefulness around us, abounding with objects of love and sympathy; and a future as full of blessed hope as ever.

Let us not add to the trouble of our disappointment, that which is really a greater trouble, ingratitude for past blessings, and forgetfulness of those we have and those we hope for; but gird up the loins of our mind, and manfully make the best of all the life that God is pleased to give us.

"Never go gloomily, man with a mind!
Hope is a better companion than fear,
Providence ever benignant and kind,
Gives with a smile what you take with a tear;
All will be right,—Look to the light,—
Morning is ever the daughter of night,
All that was black will be all that is bright
Cheerily, cheerily then! cheer up!

Many a foe is a friend in disguise,
Many a sorrow a blessing most true,
Helping the heart to be happy and wise,
With the future more smiling, and hope ever new;
Stand in the van,—Strive like a man!
Trusting in God, while you do what you can;
This is the bravest and cleverest plan
Cheerily, cheerily then! cheer up!"

NERVOUS TIMIDITY.

B.—Among the sources of unhappiness that seem to originate with ourselves, is one which is often very painful, particularly to the young. I allude to NERVOUS TIMIDITY AND BASHFULNESS. How will your argument bear upon this? it surely cannot in any way be attributed to want of holiness.

A.—I believe our argument will bear upon this as well as it does on all other sources of unhappiness. The immediate cause of the discomfort you allude to, is usually an undue anxiety about the opinion formed by others of us, and of our conduct. Now if the chief object of our lives is to please God, it will be a matter of comparatively small importance whether we please men or not; and unless the service of God *is* our chief object, we are not acting up to our profession as Christians; but without confining ourselves to this abstract principle, let us consider the matter a little more practically.

Both observation and experience prove that the degree in which this timidity is felt, depends very much upon the degree in which other subjects occupy and interest the mind. If this is full of, and

intent upon, matter of great importance, it cannot think much about the opinion of other people. A deep and zealous interest in any cause will impart strength and courage to the most timid. Suppose for example, that a nervous bashful woman is compelled to appear before a public tribunal in a matter of little or no interest to her, her timidity and confusion will perhaps prevent her either thinking or speaking with deliberation and accuracy, and her agitation may be most painful; but let the matter in which she is to come forward, be one affecting the reputation or the life of her husband or child, and all timidity will disappear, she will become bold in her good cause, and utterly unconscious or regardless of the observation or opinion of others, her whole soul being otherwise occupied.

Again, there may be those who, though collected and at ease when among intimate friends, become nervous and uncomfortable when thrown into the society of those whom they deem greater, or wiser, or better than themselves; but this is only an evidence that the fear of man, and a strong desire to be approved by man, exercise too great power over them, and that they are not sufficiently influenced by the Spirit of God. Why is it that persons naturally timid, lose this character on their death-bed, and can then converse with the proud and the great, as freely as with the poor and the humble? It is because the fear of God is *then*

stronger than the fear of man; because they care not then what man thinks of them. God's will, and God's approval is then their all in all.

The true remedy for the evil we are considering is *self-respect*, derived from an assurance that we are doing our duty to God and man, so far as we are able. If we are doing this, however humble our sphere, we are fulfilling the part allotted to us in creation, and we may remember without undue presumption, that the greatest, the wisest, and the best of men can do no more. Though humility is an essential characteristic of the Christian, he may without inconsistency boast of his high privileges, and even *reverence* himself when he remembers that God has promised to dwell within him, and that by God's blessing his heart is the very "temple of the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. iii. 16.)

Natural disposition may be the primary cause of the evil before us, and habit may have given it such strength, that though we resolve, and strive, and pray against it, it may seem to be beyond our power; but this does not prove that the test we are applying is unsuitable, it only proves that as yet we have not acquired that firm reliance on God, that deep interest in His work, which will assuredly set us above the fear of man; and prevent the timidity and the consequent discomfort we are considering.

OLD AGE.

OLD AGE, with its infirmities and trials, is sometimes a source of much unhappiness, and from one point of view, naturally and reasonably so. The loss of activity, and vigour, and usefulness; it may be of health, of enjoyments of various kinds; the aches and pains, the langour and debility, usually increasing with advance of years; the outliving of friends and companions; are all reasons sufficient to excuse, if not to justify, a good deal of discontent and unhappiness. But, as in most cases, there are two sides to the question; and it may be safely affirmed, not only that old age, if holy, will usually be peaceful and happy, but that the old age of a consistent Christian is peculiarly *conducive* to holiness, and therefore, in one sense, to happiness.

What more reasonable than that as this world becomes less and less attractive, we should look forward with more and more pleasure to the next; that as pain and decrepitude increase, we should contemplate with more joy the life that knows no suffering; that as we grow less fitted, or less inclined for the occupations and enjoyments of former years, we should fix our thoughts more calmly, more

steadily, and more pleasurably on our eternal prospects; that when the partial failure of sight or hearing, it may be of voice or memory, renders communion with others less easy and pleasant than formerly, we should enjoy more than ever, secret communion with God and our own hearts; that as the number of our friends decreases, we should think the more of those who have gone before us, and whom we hope to rejoin in glory.

Moreover, a wise man will so arrange his worldly affairs before old age overtakes him, that he need not then trouble himself about *them*. "Set thine house in order," (2 Kings xx. 1), is a precept suited to all times, but particularly so to advancing years; and it must be a wondrous comfort to the aged,—as it certainly is to all of every age, in case of approaching sickness,—to feel that the earthly house has thus been set in order, and that the mind (thereby freed from worldly anxiety) is at full liberty to rest on more pleasant and more profitable things.

As old age approaches, our temporal prospects, and our interest in the great world around us will become contracted; one outer circle after another will fade away from our attention and regard, till by slow degrees, little will remain but the small loved and loving circle of ministering friends, on whom the thoughts and affections will then chiefly rest; and thus as the desires of the heart, and the powers of the mind decrease, objects of

interest will decrease too, the one being still sufficient for the other.

Yet within this small home circle is something more important and more precious still; the very centre of our affections and our hopes, —the bright vision of our Saviour and our God—always before the Christian, but now to be more fully realized than ever, and to grow brighter and brighter as all else fades away. The more the mental eye is fixed on this opening into the spiritual world, the more radiance will be thrown back upon everything else; and all that our dearest friends could desire is, that as life draws to a close, even they should be lost sight of, in our fixed adoration of that one still greater Friend who calls us to Him with the loving words, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.)

B.—Perhaps neither you nor I know much of the trials of old age, or how they may best be borne; but as some set-off to them I have often noticed what seem to be advantages and comforts attending this stage of life. Among these may be mentioned an increase of charity in judging others, and of general kindness of heart; extreme opinions become modified; questions once thought important enough to quarrel about, are now placed among those on which friends may differ in a friendly way; harsh thoughts and harsh words, are unpalatable and

painful, and we notice a growing sweetness of disposition, which seems peculiarly consistent with gradual withdrawal from the cares and anxieties of the world, and with progress towards the life of the blest. In the poet's words, the good old man—

> "Sinks to the grave by unperceived decay,
> "While resignation gently slopes the way;
> "And all his prospects brightening to the last,
> "His heaven commences ere this world be past."

A.—So it often is. One reason may be, that in old age the passions are subdued, the carnal part of our nature is weakened, and the spiritual part is less checked and blinded. Another reason may be, that there is naturally more calm and holy meditation—the exercise of all others best suited to the leisure and quiet of old age. Whatever the cause, the result is a blessed one, and such as we must all desire to attain. What better song for the aged Christian than "On earth peace, good-will toward men"! (Luke ii. 14.) What better hope than that of "Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ"! (Rom. v. 1.)

THE CONTEMPLATION OF DEATH.

B.—There is one important subject connected with the future, that you have not alluded to. I mean the CONTEMPLATION OF OUR OWN DEATH; a subject which ought not to make us unhappy, but which very often does do so.

A.—True, there are probably few even among the really religious, who feel at all times both ready and willing to lie down and die, whose habitual prayer is—"Come Lord, when Thou wilt, where Thou wilt, and as Thou wilt;" and undoubtedly, to the bulk of nominal Christians, the thought of death is gloomy, depressing, and often exceedingly painful.

God has for wise reasons, implanted in the human mind, a natural and instinctive love of life, and dread of death; and it is only as the natural man yields to the spiritual, and instinct gives place to reason and religion, that these feelings are changed. So long as men think only of this world, and depend upon it for their happiness; so long as they look upon death as causing the loss of all they love, of all they have, of all they hope for, as a dark and

fearful plunge into an unknown world; they are likely to contemplate it with dislike, anxiety, and dread; the thought of it may then produce the greatest unhappiness; but does not all this indicate an absence of religious faith, and in that sense, a want of holiness?

The true Christian does *not* think only of this world, or depend upon it for his happiness; his self is not so much his body as his soul; his life is not so much his earthly existence, as the life eternal—already begun, and to be continued in spite of death. To him, the world to come is no unknown world, because he daily realises it as the abode of His Father and Saviour, whose presence he is ever conscious of, and with whom he even now holds close communion. He now sees with the eye of faith, what he believes he shall see in open vision when death removes the veil. Without undervaluing the blessings of this world, he feels quite convinced that those of the next are far better; and his confidence in the efficacy of the great atonement, is sufficient to remove all fear of the future; sufficient to assure him that death will but make perfect that union with his Saviour, which in a measure he even now enjoys.

B.—How is it that so few of us attain this happy confidence, this cheerful anticipation of death?

A.—It is because we do not realise the truth; this world and the things of it engross our thoughts, and hide the next world from our view; and it is only when the one seems to be slipping away from us, and when the other is drawing very near, and becoming a stern reality not to be denied or escaped, that we begin to estimate their relative importance. Then indeed, we feel unhappy, we fear, we tremble; we begin to realise the truth, and we begin to act consistently with it; we wish and we strive to make God our friend; we feel our great need of a Saviour; we ask for pardon through His atoning blood; and if by God's great mercy our prayer is heard and granted, our faith, our hope, our confidence increase; the world becomes less dear to us; death less dreadful; and fear and trembling give place to peace and joy. But what has brought about this great change? simply the belief that death draws near! Yet, does it not draw near to us every day of our lives? do we ever know that it is not close at hand? Surely it were wise to live continually as if we really thought that any day might be our last.

B.—But would not this interfere a good deal with the ordinary duties, as well as with the enjoyment of life?

A.—I believe not. It is told of a good man in

active life, that on being asked what would be his course if warned that but one week of life remained, he took out his tablets covered with written engagements, and said, "I would fulfil all these." We must not forget that God has placed us where we are, that what He has given us, is to be used to His glory, and that thankfulness and praise are the best tribute we can render.

It may be difficult to remember death when it does not seem to be near at hand, and when other subjects fully occupy the mind; yet there is no lack of warnings, if we will but consider them as such. Each tolling bell we hear, each churchyard we pass, each suit of mourning we see, proclaims the great truth; as do our grey hairs, and every other symptom of infirmity and decay; while each night's unconsciousness may remind us of the sleep of death. It is even well sometimes to picture to our minds the solemn time when our death will be drawing very near, and to contemplate the change that will take place when his cold hand is actually upon us; in fact, to familiarise ourselves with the anticipation of that, which sooner or later, must be our portion. Such thoughts will make us serious, perhaps sometimes sad; but they are very useful. Under their influence we see the world in its true colours; we look upon our fellow-men as fellow-mortals and fellow-sinners, and treat them accordingly; and we look upon all dear to us on earth, as

blessings to be enjoyed with thankfulness, but still as blessings secondary to those in store for us.

Truly it is a solemn subject to discuss; and talk and reason about it as we may, no man knows how he will himself receive the awful summons. We may, however, while looking forward to it, and preparing for it, contemplate the bright rather than the gloomy side of the picture; we may remember that just as extended life must inevitably bring new and unknown trials and sorrows, so death removes the "righteous from the evil to come," (Isa. lvii. 1)—from temptation, from danger, and from sin;—and transports him to a land where happiness will be unclouded, and where sorrow is unknown.

May you and I while yet in life and health be able to contemplate our end without misgiving; and when that end comes, be able to say with David—

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Psa. xxiii. 4.)

And may we then with unwavering faith hear the blessed words—

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of MY RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Isa. xli. 10.)

A SENSE OF SIN.

B.—THERE must certainly be one kind of unhappiness which is an exception to your rule; I mean that which is produced by A SENSE OF SIN either in ourselves or in others.

A.—I do not think that even this forms any exception in the case of a consistent Christian; and, remember, our argument throughout only applies to such.

Sin is indeed a fruitful source of sorrow; it ever has made, and ever will make, men miserable. As for OUR OWN SIN, when we reflect on its frequent recurrence, its awful accumulation, and the dreadful consequences of it, we may justly tremble and despair, *till we look beyond ourselves;* but it is a full conviction of our sinfulness, and of our utter inability to merit heaven, or to escape hell by our own unassisted endeavour, that makes us look for a Saviour, and leads us to trust in Him, and to lay hold of those clear and precious promises of pardon and reconciliation, which place salvation within the reach of all. So long as sin destroys our peace, it is certain that we are not applying the proper

remedy; we are not truly and earnestly repenting of the sin; we are not striving against it to the utmost of our power; we are not laying our burden on the Lord, and relying in faith and patience on His word; if we do this, we *must* have peace, and the want of it proves that our repentance is not sincere, or that our faith is not perfect. If we grieve over some infirmity of our nature, some besetting sin which with all our endeavour we seem to be unable to conquer, here is still no exception to the rule, sin as yet reigns unsubdued within us, and "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. lvii. 21.)

With regard to THE SIN OF OTHERS, when we see the broad way that leads to destruction crowded with our fellow-creatures, we have indeed a lawful cause of grief, for a lost soul is the saddest object we can contemplate. Perhaps those we love seem to be walking in this evil way; the parent may see his child sunk in wickedness, and scorning his reproof; the child may see his parent growing old in iniquity, and to all appearance given over to a reprobate mind; husband or wife may have sad cause to mourn over the sin of the other. A Christian's sorrow is in such cases not only natural, but useful; it is sorrow for the sinner that calls forth our prayers and exertions for his amendment; but if this sorrow destroys our peace of mind, and deprives us of that peculiar happiness which

pertains to the child of God, we have evidence that our faith is weak, and that we are too anxious about things which are beyond our control.

We are not called upon to judge others, much less to pass sentence upon them. Our duty is rather, to lead them to repentance, and (as before said) the fulfilment of duty ought to afford us pleasure. Moreover may we not be thankful and glad too, that any sinner, especially if he be one very dear to us, has been brought within the range of our good influence; that life has been spared to him that he may repent, and to us that we may help him to do so; thankful above all, that we have a long-suffering God, and a kind Advocate, and that there is a way by which the greatest sinner may be reconciled to his offended Maker. Let us dwell on such causes for gratitude, rather than on our own anticipation of future evil, and then go on faithfully and cheerfully sowing good seed, and praying for God's blessing on it, in the hope that God in His good time will cause it to bring forth fruit abundantly. Charity, you know, "hopeth all things."

Even in the most distressing case of all, when a friend has gone down to the grave unrepentant, or in all the hopelessness of unbelief, when the tree has fallen, there to lie; even then, sorrow which destroys our peace, and prevents a holy resignation to the will of God, is undoubtedly sinful. It is true that

we cannot then indulge the reflections, and the hopes, which suggest themselves while life remains; but there are nevertheless considerations well calculated to prevent or remove the pangs we could not but feel, were we *sure* that our friend had gone to a place of torment. Whatever our fears, it is impossible that we can *know* his doom; we know not what or how many talents were committed to his keeping, or what were the peculiar temptations to which by nature he was exposed; for though each man may know his own responsibility, he knows but little of the responsibility of another; of him we may say "To his own master he standeth or falleth." (Rom. xiv. 4.) The matter is wholly in the hands of God. He has thought fit to summon a soul from this world, and it is not for us to call in question an act of our Maker. We should rather do as David did; while his child lived he prayed earnestly and anxiously that it might recover, but when its death plainly showed the will of God, he submitted piously to the decree; and just as he thereupon rose up and went about his accustomed business, so should we, under such a trial as we are contemplating, exclaim with perfect resignation, "Thy will be done;" and then leaving that which we cannot alter, and which belongs to God alone, in God's hands, go cheerfully about the performance of our daily duties,—the fulfilment of life's work.

DISCONTENT.

B.—I wonder whether this test would apply to DISCONTENTED PEOPLE; to people, I mean, who are continually grumbling or lamenting over their lot in life, and thinking how much happier they might have been under other circumstances.

A.—I know no reason why it should not apply, that is to say, why we may not consider their discontent an evidence of their want of holiness.

People sometimes submit with a sort of sullen resignation to the dispensations of Providence, and are at the same time very much dissatisfied with them. Because they are what they are, and not something else, they are unhappy, and think themselves justified in being so. They seem to forget that God has chosen for them, and that their duty is to perform their part in that position in which they are placed by Him; they forget that every condition of life has its trials, and that the removal of one of these would very often lead to the discovery of another. The rich may think that if they were poor they would be free from many temptations and cares, and be

better able to attend to their souls; the poor, that if they were better off, they would escape the difficulties and temptations that endanger *their* virtue; the young may imagine that old age affords the best opportunity of renouncing the world; and the aged, that the activity and energy of youth are requisite for the performance of many Christian duties; they who live in a crowd believe that they could be holier and happier in solitude; while those again whose lot is a lonely one, long for the opportunities of usefulness that society affords. Whether these are right or wrong in their belief, it would be more to the purpose were they to accept their position cheerfully, and, whatever that may be, to feel sure that God will give them power to do their duty, and to be happy in it, if they use their own endeavour, and seek His blessing.

B.—But admitting that our actual happiness depends greatly on ourselves, you must allow that the lot of some, is much more full of what usually tends to happiness, than that of others.

A.—Undoubtedly; but we may often discover some compensation for what at first sight appears to be unmixed evil; and, perhaps, the elements of happiness are really in this way more evenly distributed than is generally supposed.

B.—Can you find any compensation in the lot of the very poor and destitute, whose lives seem to me to be one continued joyless, hopeless struggle?

A.—I believe I might send you for an answer to the deathbed of many prosperous men of business, and luxurious followers of fashion, and successful politicians, who would sadly tell you that their whole lives have been so full of the cares, and anxieties, and pleasures of the world, that they have had no time to think about their souls, and that they have been so well satisfied with the good things that have fallen to their lot on earth that they have never felt a desire for anything better; they needed no other heaven to satisfy their longing after happiness, and now, alas, they can only say with Solomon, "All is vanity." But, in truth, we do not find most discontent among the very poor; these often set a noble example of patience and cheerfulness under very painful circumstances; we see much more of it in those who have far less excuse for it. Let us, however, consider some of those cases in which people are apt to think that they are justified in being discontented.

I could instance, for example, the case of an excellent person who complains that her lot is cast among worldly-minded people, who have no fellow-feeling with her on subjects nearest to her heart. If she speaks about religion, she meets with no

sympathy, perhaps no attention; while, on the other hand, their conversation, amusements, and habits are altogether distasteful to her. She cannot conscientiously withdraw from them, and to refuse to join in their pursuits would endanger the affection which she is very unwilling to lessen; so she spends a great deal of her time and thoughts in sighing over her lot in life. But what a mistake is this; if she sees, as she admits she does, that it is her duty to remain where she is, she has simply to ascertain her duty in that place, and endeavour to fulfil it. In all such cases it is as well to believe that God has placed us just where we are, and that we are to *accept the position* willingly. A good soldier neither chooses his own ground, nor grumbles at the post he is set to occupy; the more he loves his commander and his cause, the more cheerfully will he do his duty, however repugnant it may be to his natural inclination. There is something very soothing in the belief that God has placed us where we are, and that we can do more good there than elsewhere; if this happens to be a somewhat dark spot, we should recognise our obligation to shine the more brightly, and remember that our feeble light may be more useful there, than it would be in a more enlightened place.

If our discontented friend would take this view of the matter, she might find a sufficient field for the exercise of all Christian graces, and be content

to work in it; and she might persuade herself that a consistent course of affectionate sympathy and cheerful piety must sooner or later produce a good result. She might remember that our Saviour came down from heaven, and talked, and ate, and wept with sinners,—an example of love and sympathy;—and that St. Paul was "made all things to all men that he might by all means win some"; and then, endeavouring to follow their steps, she would walk hand in hand with her companions, whenever she could do so safely, hoping to find many an opportunity of saying a word in season, and of exercising a wholesome influence by her example as well as by her advice, for there are many who, though scorning reproof, and deaf to religious exhortation, may be most favorably influenced by the mere example of a consistent Christian.

With regard to *recreations*, she might remember that what is right or wrong, depends very much upon the spirit in which they are entered into, and that by joining in those that are lawful, we may do good by showing that rational amusement is by no means inconsistent with a religious life. Our example and advice are, indeed, as much needed, and as valuable in the midst of our recreations as elsewhere, and we should hesitate before we refuse to join our companions in them, merely because they are not exactly to our taste; for we may thus draw a line between us and them, making it some-

what more easy for us to maintain a devotional frame of mind, but which at the same time may not only deprive them of our good influence, but give them a stronger dislike to religion, and tend to confirm them in their worldly views. Moreover as a matter of self-denial and self-discipline, such concession to the wishes of others may be as useful to us as abnegation of any other sort.

Our friend will, no doubt, continue to have her trials, as we all have, but these she will look upon as opportunities for proving the soundness of her principles, and the strength of her faith. Let her but recognise and accept her real position in the light of truth, and she may rest assured that her proper work lies before her, and that if *discontent* takes possession of her, she has strong evidence that she is both forgetting her blessings, and neglecting her duties.

Again; our BUSINESS OR PROFESSION may be the cause of our discontent. It may seem to interfere with our religious duties; or to expose us to special temptations and dangers; or to shut us out of some sphere of usefulness; or to compel us to do what is repugnant to our feelings, if not to our consciences; or it may throw us among people we would much rather avoid; or separate us from those we love; and we go on with it as a matter of necessity, but feeling discontented and unhappy.

Now there must be something wrong here; duty tells us either to stay where we are, or to make a change. Duty, properly understood, is an uncompromising master that *must* be obeyed, and if duty tells us to stay where we are, it tells us also to be contented and happy where we are; we have no longer any scruples of conscience, or doubts about the right and wrong, we have accepted the position, and must fight cheerfully and manfully in it. If the business, though lawful, be full of temptations and dangers, it had better (if a necessary one) be conducted by those who are well fortified by religion than by those who are not. A Christian may prove to the world that religion and the occupations of daily life can, not only go hand in hand together, but mutually aid each other. By regulating his daily walk among busy men on Christian principles, he may be teaching a daily lesson, and doing his master's work. To a man of prayer, the holiest thoughts will not be intrusive in the midst of his business or professional employment; neither will the recollection of such business interrupt his devotion, when he returns thanks for the benefit and pleasure it affords him. He will have difficulties, and trials, and dangers; he will often have to gird up his loins, and tighten his armour, but he will at the same time remember that without a conflict there is no victory, without a cross no crown.

Again it is possible to be discontented with OUR NATURAL CHARACTER OR CONSTITUTION, believing that it exposes us to dangers from which others are exempt; but while we mourn over and struggle against our constitutional infirmity or besetting sin, we may take for granted that all men have some weak point, at which Satan most frequently attacks them, and most easily ensnares them. Under this impression, few would venture (were it possible) to change characters with any other person, for though they would gladly be relieved from their own particular grievance, they would fear that the change might expose them to something worse.

Whatever our natural infirmity, God "knoweth whereof we are made," and will judge us accordingly. We should feel thankful that we are aware of that infirmity, as we are thereby better able to counteract it, and to guard ourselves against its evil consequences. This may be the special cross we have to bear in following Christ; but if God sends the trial, He will also help us to bear it. "My grace is sufficient for thee," ought to encourage us to trust in Him, and to "fight the good fight" in faith and hope, and to go on our way rejoicing. Whatever may throw a shadow over our lot in life; whatever may be our natural infirmity, whatever our particular trial, let us "run with patience the race that is set before us," and learn, like St. Paul, "to be therewith content."

B.—But is it not possible to carry this principle of *content* too far, and to go wrong by being satisfied with things as they are, when we ought rather to be anxious for their improvement?

A.—Content, such as we speak of, is by no means opposed to improvement or advance, neither will it check our endeavour to become wiser and better, or to do all we can for the good of others, or even to increase our worldly possessions, and our worldly enjoyments. Life is in every respect progressive, and just as the traveller who pushes forward with energy, is contented with his progress, so may we desire and strive to advance continually in the right direction, and yet be content with our actual position, and with the progress we are making. What better instance can we have than St. Paul himself, who though avowedly "in every state content," (Phil. iv. 11), was no idler, and no mean example of religious zeal.

If your question refers to a change of place or of occupation from conscientious motives, it is certain that we must not remain content with what we know to be wrong; at the same time, before abandoning a position which may have strong claims upon us, we should think well of the responsibility of so doing, and consider whether we may not be forsaking our allotted post, and the positive duties belonging to it, and placing ourselves where we are

not so much wanted, or where we may not be equally useful. We should take care that self has not too much to do with our decision, and we may perhaps, profitably ask ourselves whether we are not more likely to be led astray by over scrupulousness, or by an excess of zeal, or it may be, by too much self-confidence, than by an excess of patience and humility.

KNOW THYSELF is a precept so useful, and so comprehensive, that even the heathen deemed it to be divine. It is only by self-knowledge that we are enabled to tell what we can do, and what we cannot do; what our duty requires of us; what our weakness excuses; what discretion forbids. No one can lay down exact rules for another. Each to his own master must stand or fall; and the true secret of content, as well as of happiness, is the internal conviction that we are doing our duty to that Master to the utmost of our power.

ON DOING OUR DUTY TO GOD.

THE BENEFIT AS REGARDS THE PRESENT.

B.—That last remark of yours, as well as others during our discussion, touches upon a point of no little difficulty, and one which, however good your arguments may be, sometimes leads me to doubt the practical value of them. I mean the question of DUTY. It is very well to say, do your duty to God and man, and that is all that can be required of you; do your duty and you must be happy, because the performance of duty is in itself a pleasure; but practically, how very difficult it often is to recognize our duty with certainty; to be quite sure that we are right in acting in this or that particular way; when, for example, the reasons for or against seem to be nearly balanced, or when our own welfare, or that of those most dear to us, or consequences still more important are at stake. Indeed, to a scrupulous mind, this uncertainty is so often a source of real unhappiness, that you may very properly treat it as such in the application of your test, and consider whether unhappiness arising from this cause, can in any sense be evidence of a want of holiness.

Again, when you say that the performance of

duty is necessarily a pleasure, are you not contradicted by the fact, that duty often requires us to do something which is most painful, both to ourselves and others, and which calls for the utmost self-denial and self-sacrifice?

A.—The subject of DUTY is so important and so peculiarly practical, that it may be well to consider it rather fully, in order to ascertain,

1st, Whether the conscientious performance of duty, *as duty to God*, will not secure us against unhappiness, even when it compels us to do what is naturally painful.

2nd, Whether a *determination* thus to do our duty will not equally secure us against unhappiness while our right course is still doubtful.

3rd, How we may determine in what our duty really consists.

In theory it might be enough to say, that love to God, and love to man, combined with the study of our eternal interests, ought to make the performance of our duty to God and man the most pleasant, as it is the most important, business of our lives; but in practice, as you remark, we very often find that it is not so; let us consider how this happens.

It is certain that we cannot be happy and unhappy at the same time,—happy in the performance

of duty, and unhappy because of the pain which that duty involves,—one or other feeling must have the ascendancy; but if a sense of duty has prompted us to do what is naturally painful, it is surely unwise to forfeit the well-earned satisfaction of doing that duty, by lamenting the particular evil it occasions; that is, to lose sight of the greater in painfully contemplating the less. Then why do we do so? It may be that duty to God has *not* been our primary motive, nor the will of God our chief object, although we fully believed that they were; for example, in the common course of events, we find it necessary to do something, or to submit to something, which we would gladly avoid, and we yield to the necessity because (as we are apt to say) it is our duty; but we do so reluctantly, sorrowfully, and perhaps with much ill-will towards some one who may have been the immediate cause of this necessity. Now all this time we may be deceiving ourselves; we may be adopting our course of action not because it is our duty to God, but because personal and worldly considerations, —quite irrespective of religion,—impel us so to act. We often see a man avowedly acting on this lower principle, saying, it is a duty I owe to myself, it is a duty I owe to my family, it is a duty I owe to the public, and even if he says, it is a duty I owe to God, the expression often only means that the world expects him to do this duty to God, and that

therefore he does it; thus even in this case making the service of God a secondary consideration.

If we act from such inferior motives (and we may do so almost unconsciously), we have no right to expect the pleasure which is the consequence and the reward of doing our duty to God. *That duty* has had nothing to do with our conduct; our motives have been worldly; and, considering the uncertainty of all worldly issues, we find but little to compensate for our self-inflicted pain,—the chance of some future good being at best a poor antidote for present suffering.

The case is very different when duty to God is really our chief motive. Our course of action, though perhaps practically the same, is then no longer a matter of inclination or expediency, but of right and wrong placed in direct opposition. We have a choice:—on the one hand, we may do our duty, and in so doing deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and show our love, and our obedience, and thus draw nearer to our Heavenly Father: on the other hand, we may refuse to do that duty, and thus sin with our eyes open; and in so doing we must suffer too. With such a motive, and such an alternative before us, we may surely derive satisfaction from the performance of duty, sufficient to outweigh all other feelings; and by sacrificing these feelings to the will of God, we may very reasonably *rejoice* in the victory He has enabled us to gain over our weaker nature.

ON DOING OUR DUTY TO GOD.

THE BENEFIT AS REGARDS THE PAST AND FUTURE.

But the satisfaction derived from making duty to God our chief motive, is not confined to the immediate time of doing it; it extends quite as fully to the past and the future.

With regard to The Past, much unhappiness arises from the consciousness that we might have acted, or that we ought to have acted, otherwise than we have done; especially when the consequences of what we did are unsatisfactory, perhaps even disastrous. But if, when we acted, duty to God was our motive and our end, we may very properly dispel all such retrospective unhappiness; because, however painful these consequences are, or may be, we know that we only did that which at the time we believed to be right, leaving the issue with God; and we feel that we could have done no more. The world, judging by results, may condemn us; but conscience acquits us of all intentional wrong, and whether the goodness of our motives vindicates us or not in the eyes of others, we may consistently "cast our burden on the Lord," and find our comfort and happiness in Him.

As regards THE FUTURE, the satisfaction arises from a *determination* to do our duty to God, and a sense of the advantage of so doing. This determination is a wonderful antidote to the trouble and anxiety we are apt to feel, when a difficult question of conduct lies before us, and we are in doubt as to the course we ought to adopt. Perhaps each course open to us is in itself very objectionable: one may involve personal suffering; another, loss of property; another, may endanger our life or health or reputation, or may threaten the injury or the alienation of our friends. No wonder that we are unhappy, if we simply weigh one evil against the other, in order to choose the least painful; and no wonder if we find difficulty in coming to a right decision, and if we grow still more unhappy from this very difficulty;—there is, in fact, nothing but what is painful before us; and this is quite sufficient to prevent calm reflection, and to bias our judgment.

Now let us contemplate the matter from another point of view, and see what a different aspect it assumes. In the first place, we may be sure that however difficult the case may be, there must be some one right way of acting. We may be sure, too, that this one right way is within our reach, because nothing beyond it is required of us. Then we may remember that the evils we dread as the result of our measures, have no existence till those measures are adopted; so that present annoyance

about them is, to say the least, premature. But we are determined not to adopt any measures till we see clearly which are right; and we know quite well that when we do see this, all difficulty will be at an end; for though the consequences may be most repugnant to our natural inclination, when these are placed in one scale, and our plain and positive duty to God in the other, we shall be able with God's help, not only to do right, but to *take pleasure* in so doing. All this we know while still in doubt as to our future course of action; and accordingly, instead of grieving over this choice of evils, and permitting anxiety and fear to depress our spirits, or confuse and overpower our judgment, we shall calmly and rationally set about finding out our duty, convinced that when we have found it out we shall be able to do it willingly, and perhaps even cheerfully.

Such considerations as these, well established in the mind, and rendered habitual, go a long way towards making life happy. For want of them we may often, when clouds seem to be gathering, rise from our bed, and enter upon the duties of a new day, sad, anxious, full of care; and go through that day with little real joy and thanksgiving. Though mercies and blessings are abundant, those gathering clouds keep them out of view, and throw a cold chill over a heart perhaps otherwise warm and grateful. At such a time, we should draw very

near to God, and say, "Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?" We should think of the many "*Fear nots*" of the Bible, and take courage. With the ear of faith we should hear our Heavenly Father saying to us, "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," (Phil. iv. 6, 7,); or again, hear Him saying: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 5, 6.)

Do we still feel too weak for our burden, let us cast that burden on the Lord; His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Does that burden threaten to press us down, to crush us, even to kill us? the voice still says, "Fear not, I am with thee." Let but God's will be our will, and duty to God our first care, then the cloud will rise, the light will increase, and the day that looked so gloomy will grow bright and hopeful. Why is this? Because God's face is shining on us, and we are blessed with a glimpse of heaven. Rest assured, my friend, that whether each day as it comes and goes, be a happy day or otherwise, depends very much upon ourselves.

And so it is with regard to more distant and indistinct troubles which lie before us all, and over

which a veil is mercifully thrown. Whatever may come—be they trials and difficulties, great or small—there will be, there must be, some one path of duty open to us, by following which, in a prayerful, trustful spirit, peace of mind will be ensured; and therefore, if the prospect of such distant trials should trouble us, we have but to remember that "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness," (Ps. cxii. 4); determine to do our duty to God at all times, and then cheerfully leave the future in His hands.

OUR DUTY TO GOD.

WHAT IS IT?

A.—We may next consider how we are to ascertain WHAT OUR DUTY REALLY IS, and how we may feel sure that we are doing it,—often no easy matter for we meet with some cases in themselves very perplexing; some, with two sides almost equally balanced; some, in which our own interest or that of others is likely to suffer. Our fears, our friendships, our prejudices, are all apt to mislead; how then are we to decide?

Perhaps the best general answer to this question is, that what we conscientiously believe to be right, is right; at least, so far as we ourselves are concerned. Different men will decide in different ways; for example, one man, conscious of his inability to fathom a very difficult question, believes it to be his duty to be guided by a more competent person; a second, equally unable to do so, yet unwilling to trust to the judgment of any one but himself, takes his stand on some one principle which he knows to be right in the abstract, and to maintain this principle he believes to be his duty; while a third may consider that he ought to unravel the whole question, weigh

every point, and laboriously work out the result. Here each acts rightly, because he acts conscientiously; and feeling this, he will act with confidence and energy.

B.—Suppose I am one of those who determine to find out for themselves their right line of conduct, how am I to set to work?

A.—Be thoughtful, be prayerful, be charitable, be impartial, be courageous, be consistent; lay aside mere personal feelings, and bring broad and general principles to bear upon the subject.

B.—I do not doubt the propriety of all this; still, I doubt whether it will secure me against leaving off with a very imperfect or distorted view of the matter, owing to my shortsightedness, or my fears, or my prejudices; in fact, to the general imperfection of my character or judgment.

A.—Presuming of course that you are quite in earnest, I can only repeat that you must *think the matter out;* but in so doing, I believe you might be very much helped by looking at it from different points of view, and by bringing certain trains of thought to bear upon it; call it, if you like, thinking by certain rules.

B.—But suppose I am naturally somewhat timid and narrow-minded, how am I to judge of some painful or perplexing question upon broad and general principles?

A.—You can at least make the attempt by some such process as this: Instead of looking at the worst side of the question, and dwelling on its evils, and lamenting all the personal inconvienence it will cause you, as if your own immediate comfort and pleasure were the only things to be thought of, force your mind away from these details for a while, and give it a wider range. Think, for instance, of your general position as an immortal being, travelling towards eternity, and liable at any moment to sickness and death; glance back at your past career, and onward to your future, both of body and soul; think of the coming time when these passing cares, which now disturb you so much, shall be esteemed trifles of no real importance; in fact, try to realise the great truths, in which as a child of God, and heir of heaven, you are mainly interested; and after dwelling on them for a while, you will very probably bring your mind back to the subject in hand, free from momentary prejudice, less fearful of personal inconvenience, and in every way better fitted than before, to form a correct judgment on sound principles.

Again, SELF, in one form or other, is very apt to mislead us, and to warp our better judgment.

Self-indulgence, self-interest, self-will, self-conceit, may each take a part. It is very hard to be quite impartial where self is concerned; but we may do something towards removing this difficulty by mental effort; by an effort, I may say, of the imagination.

Let us *suppose*, for example, that the parties concerned in the matter in question are strangers to us, and we, mere lookers on. Or that some friend is situated exactly as we are, and requests us to advise him how to act. Or that the relative position of ourselves and those whose interest seems to be opposed to our own, is reversed; and in this way put ourselves entirely out of the question. We may thus be able to see the matter in a more correct light than before, and to understand it much better, than when we see it only through the medium of self-interest. Then, as a general rule, we may be sure that what we should consider right conduct in others, circumstanced as we are, is equally right for ourselves.

Again, SHORTSIGHTEDNESS is another great obstacle to the right perception of duty. We are apt to attach too much importance to the circumstances of the present hour, and to the immediate consequences of our measures, and thus to form erroneous conclusions. To counteract this tendency, we may with some, benefit have recourse to the same process of reasoning, only instead of substituting ideal

persons for real ones, we must imagine that the time alone has changed. Thus, let us suppose that the case before us, occurred a year ago; had it done so, how should we now wish that we had then acted? Or looking forward, how shall we wish we had acted in this matter, when some twelve months hence, or when from our death-bed, we look back upon it?

PARTIALITY is another snare that has to be avoided. We are often called upon to act, and to decide how we ought to act, in cases where the opposing interests of other people are involved, and when our measures must affect the one or the other of them for good or evil; and then it may happen, that because one of the parties is our friend, and the other unknown to us, or because one is present and the other far away, or because towards one of them we entertain a great dislike, or because we simply wish to please, or to avoid giving offence, or because one side of the question is presented to us with a stirring appeal to our feelings; it may happen, I say, that from some such causes as these, we may both decide and act unjustly, without any intention of doing so; in fact, a correct view of the case is rendered difficult by the circumstances of it.

Let us then, endeavour to help our judgment by having recourse to the same process, and imagine that as soon as we have done what we are going to do, every person directly or indirectly affected by

our proceeding, will appear, and call upon us to explain and justify all that we have done; and that in reply we *must* tell the whole truth both as to our acts and our motives. It is certain that our conduct ought always to be regulated by such principles that an ordeal like this would not alarm us, and that we should scrupulously avoid everything that we might be ashamed or unwilling to avow before it.

B.—I can quite believe that some such mode of obtaining an unprejudiced view of a difficult question may often be very useful; and I cannot deny, that if the conclusion arrived at, resolves itself into duty to God, there ought to be no hesitation about acting up to our convictions; but since you suggest that our duty may sometimes compel us to do what is prejudicial and painful to our dearest friends, and, perhaps, what may bring upon us their reproaches and enmity, I would ask,—is not such a result calculated to make us hesitate before we act, and to make us very unhappy when we do act?

A.—So much so, that nothing but an over-ruling conviction of our duty to God can reconcile us to it; but this will do so, and ought to be sufficient for us. At the same time, we may in such cases remember that when the will of God is manifest, we become simply instruments in His hands to work out that

will. Circumstances have brought both us and our friends to a point at which we must act, and they must suffer; how far these circumstances might have been controlled or prevented by either party, is now nothing to the purpose, our present duty being plain; so that, though we may deeply regret that they suffer, we should do so only as we might, if their suffering arose from causes with which we have nothing whatever to do.

Then, again, as to their reproaches, enmity, or estrangement, we know that in doing our duty we are always liable to annoyances and trouble of one kind or other, were it not so there would be no difficulty or merit in doing it; the trouble in such cases is, that we lose friends or make enemies, and a very sore evil it is; but we must treat it as we ought to treat all other evils coming upon us from without, and beyond our own control—to be lamented perhaps, without sin, but to be borne with cheerful resignation to the will of God.

CONCLUSION.

B.—Without disparaging your general argument, it has sometimes occurred to me, during our conversation, that a sceptic might tell you that he also is quite happy; his philosophy both teaches him, and enables him, to treat the passing events of life with comparative indifference, and to reconcile himself to what is inevitable; so that the peace of mind your arguments tend to establish, is his already without them.

A.—I do not dispute the value of philosophy in securing a calm and happy state of mind to the unbeliever; it is but philosophy of a higher kind, founded on revealed truth, that secures it to the Christian; but while there is nothing consolitary in his philosophy which we have not in ours, there is that in ours which his can never give; that which we can never part with. There are many besides philosophical sceptics who tell us that they are happy without religion, and who look upon it only as a sad and gloomy thing; and there are many, alas! who *hate* religion because it is utterly opposed to their common thoughts, and habits, and pleasures, and would destroy the only happiness they know; but my arguments are not intended for any of these; they are rather

addressed to those who value religion far too much to seek for peace in infidelity and indifference, or to look for true happiness in frivolity and sin; they are in fact offered to those who have too much holiness to permit them to enjoy the so-called happiness of the faithless and wicked, and too little holiness to ensure to them the full and proper happiness of the Christian. They are offered too to those who would seem to prefer the bitter cup of sorrow, to that cup of mercy and love which is ever by its side. But, in truth, my object throughout has been to show, not so much that happiness depends on holiness, as that unhappiness affords evidence of a want of that holiness, which must be productive of peace, —affords evidence that we are not doing what we have to do AS OUR DUTY TO GOD, out of love to God, and "FOR HIS SAKE"—for as George Herbert says,

> "This is the famous stone
> That turneth all to Gold."

Do not however suppose me to mean that man can work out his own salvation, or merit heaven by his own works. The more we strive to do our duty to God, the more convinced we must be of our inability to do it without the help of His Holy Spirit. The more we look into our own hearts, the more we must feel that our sin can only be blotted out by a Saviour's blood.

Neither suppose me to mean, that with all our faith, and all our endeavour, we shall be, while on

earth, altogether free from unhappiness. The best of us have to wage a continual warfare with our spiritual enemy, and our fallen nature, and these will too often prevail against us. Suffering and sorrow are part of life's heritage, but happiness is another part, and the proportion of these that falls to the lot of each of us depends very much upon himself. Sunshine is enjoyed all the more for occasional gloom, and every sorrow has its alleviation and may certainly be turned to good account.

Let us accept both the sorrows and the joys of life as coming from a Father's hand; let the one as well as the other draw us more closely to Him; and then, come what will, we may depend on such a measure of divine help as will enable us to keep care and sorrow within proper bounds, and secure to us as much peace of mind as can be reasonably hoped for in this mortal life.

More I cannot offer, but what I have said will not be altogether useless, if you find in it an antidote to your own troubles when they come upon you, or if it enables you now and then, to supply an antidote to the unhappiness of others.

LONDON:
WILLIAM MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER ROW.